

REPORT
OF THE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON THE
PROPOSITION TO CHANGE
THE
SCHOOL OF PRACTICE
FROM
A GRAMMAR SCHOOL
TO
ONE OF A LOWER GRADE.

Made at a Special Meeting of the Board of Controllers of Public Schools,
May 26th, 1859.

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REPORT.

To the President and Members of the Board of Controllers
of Public Schools of the First School District, Penna.,

GENTLEMEN:—The special committee, to whom were referred a memorial from the Principals of the Girls' Grammar Schools, asking the Board "to change the School of Practice from a Grammar School to one of a lower grade," and a communication from the Committee on Normal School, remonstrating against the proposed change, respectfully beg leave to submit the following report :

Deeply impressed with the importance of the subject to be investigated, not only to the memorialists, but to every true friend of our cherished school system, the committee prosecuted their researches with a determination to supply themselves plentifully with information from every available source.

Every fact and every argument in which there seemed to be the slightest weight on either side of the question, received the consideration to which it was entitled ; but as an enumeration of

these would be tedious and useless, a few only of the more important will be adverted to here.

The main point to be determined by this investigation evidently is, whether the School of Practice possesses undue advantages over the other Grammar Schools, or not. If it does not, the objections urged against it so plausibly by the complainants cannot be sustained, and the cause of the alleged evils must be looked for somewhere else.

Now, as a comparison of the practice and privileges of the school complained of, with those of another grammar school, will probably throw more light on the subject than an elaborate argumentation could, the following may be drawn :

The School of Practice holds but *one* session daily, whilst a Grammar school holds *two*.

This, without doubt, is practically an advantage to the former. It cannot be gainsayed that a partiality for *one session* exists in the mind of every pupil, and that all of them desire to see such a rule established in the public schools.

It is natural and fair to infer from this fact, that many daughters of that class which can afford to be indulgent, withdraw from the Sectional Schools for the purpose of entering the Model School, partly on this account ; and as "the one session works favorably to the poorer class," also, (according to the Superintendent's report,) applicants for admission into the school in favor, will rarely if ever be few. This keeps an ample stock of material always on hand, and although the registry does not show that any unfair advantage is taken of it, so as to admit the most desirable, to the exclusion of the rest, it affords facilities for attaining the same end in another way.

A discriminating exercise of the process so expressively de-

nominated "*demotion*," would operate favorably under such circumstances, by creating vacancies in the higher classes which could be filled advantageously. So mortifying and humiliating do the pupils consider it to be "demoted," that they leave the school rather than submit to many repetitions of it. Whether on account of this—which, by the way, is an excellent plan for disposing of *dull* or *mischievous* pupils—or from other causes, it is difficult to ascertain positively, but the registry shows that a very large number leaves every month—probably on an average 300 per cent. more than leave any other Grammar School in the city during the same time.

The School of Practice has the privilege of admitting pupils from all parts of the city, and is not required to keep its average up to a certain standard; whilst, on the other hand, a Grammar School is forbidden to admit any from beyond the limits of its own Ward, and has an average given, below which it may not fall without suffering the loss of an assistant, in which case the labor of those who remain would be considerably increased.

A Grammar School receives very few pupils from any but Secondary Schools, whilst nearly all the applicants for admission into the School of Practice come from other Grammar Schools—many of them from the highest divisions, too. This is shown by an examination of the filed transfers in possession of the Committee on Normal School. Another fact which may be noted here is, that in many instances rejected candidates for admission into the Normal School leave their own schools, and enter the Model School fully prepared for its highest class, impressed with the well grounded belief that they will be admitted at the next examination.

The principal of a Girls' Grammar School has usually about

fifty pupils in her first division. These *need* her *undivided* attention, yet she cannot give it, for the other divisions, in which there are upwards of two hundred more over which she has supervision, *require*, and *must receive*, a share of it. This condition of things does not exist in the School of Practice. The teacher of the first class *there* has charge of not more than thirty, to the instruction of whom she devotes her time and attention exclusively. Yet this is not all the difference here. A division in a Grammar School has a permanent teacher *only*, whilst each corresponding division in the School of Practice has a permanent teacher and *two* pupil teachers.

This is an advantage which in itself ought to keep the grade of the Model School far above that of any competitor.

From this sketch, and it is by no means overdrawn, it must be obvious to every unbiased mind, that several causes *are* operating in favor of the Model School, the practical effect of which is to raise its grade, and at the same time lower that of the other Grammar Schools; or in other words, to elevate *one* at the expense of *all the rest*. The natural tendency of such a policy is clearly, to impair the efficiency of the school system.

How much truth there is in the allegation of the principals that "the School of Practice possesses advantages over the other Grammar Schools in Normal School examinations," is not so easily determined. However, although facts and figures, so far as they are attainable, do not throw much light on this part of the subject, a candid deliberation will convince any one that there is more force in it than would probably be attributed to it at first sight.

Girls from the School of Practice certainly feel at home during an examination conducted by teachers with whom they may be

more or less familiar, in a building to which they have become accustomed. The style of questions, too, may not be new to them, neither may they be unacquainted with the approved phraseology in answers. Hence a Model School girl goes into an examination with all these probable advantages in her favor, whilst another Grammar School girl goes into the same, not only without them, but with a corresponding number of disadvantages operating against her. The objection, then, cannot be considered wholly groundless, even if "the very examples to which the attention of the School of Practice has been called by their being performed the preceding term in the Normal School" are *not* selected.

Some of the questions given at the last examination were objectionable. This is not the opinion of the principals *only*, but of almost every one conversant with the manner in which such examinations should be conducted. To say that the *principles* of all the questions asked are contained in the text-books, and consequently ought to be understood by every candidate, is too indefinite to be satisfactory.

The *principles* of Algebra are not very different from those of Arithmetic, yet it would be unfair to test one by examples in Algebra who may have studied Arithmetic only.

Many of the arguments that are adduced against limiting the range of questions in Normal School examinations, must be more specious than forcible, else why is the custom followed by the High School faculty? There is certainly no good reason for taking a wider range in questioning *girls* for admission into the Normal School, than can be taken in examining *boys* for admission into the High School. The Professors in the latter have a limit beyond which they may not go; then why should not the

Principal of the former be limited in like manner? Surely he can find enough in the text-books to determine whether an applicant is "fit for his school." Knowledge that may have been incidentally obtained from newspapers, &c., does not always indicate "maturity of thought and general information," neither should it be essential for admission into any school.

Admitting that the School of Practice has attained a very high grade, that it is judiciously managed, and is now the best Grammar School in the city, would it be just, would it be wise to continue it as now constituted, when it so manifestly thrives at the expense of all the other Grammar Schools?

Before answering this question it may be well to ascertain whether it fully accomplishes the design for which it was established.

This—as the history of the school at its organization shows—was *mainly* "for the purpose of enabling the pupils of the Normal School to gain experience in teaching *elementary* branches, and to perfect themselves in the management of classes and the *government* of children." However well it may have been adapted *then* for effecting these purposes, it must be admitted that it has changed, and fails *now* in some important particulars.

Under the present arrangement, pupil teachers have, owing to the presence of permanent teachers and the kind of studies taught, very little "experience in teaching *elementary* branches," and scarcely any in discipline.

The term *elementary* is not properly applicable to the studies pursued in a Grammar School. Dr. Wright applied it to the branches taught in the Model School, but it should be borne in mind, this was *after the more advanced* boys had been dismissed for the purpose of adapting it to the School of Practice.

It is reasonable to suppose that a school of a secondary and primary character, in which there should be *few permanent* teachers, would afford pupil teachers better facilities for gaining a diversified, and consequently a more desirable experience than can be given in a Grammar School with a full corps of regular teachers. Charged with the entire management of a class temporarily, the probationer must be impressed with the responsibility of the position she occupies, and enjoy abundant opportunities for the exercise of discipline, to *afford which should be the main object of a School of Practice*. Each pupil in the Normal School now has the privilege of assisting to teach *four or five weeks* during a course of *two years* in a Grammar School in which there is a sufficient number of permanent teachers to attend to both teaching and discipline. Very few Normal School graduates are selected, at first, for any situation above that of assistant in a Primary or Secondary School. Surely an enlightened policy would aim to afford those who are to become teachers, a liberal amount of training of such a character as seems best calculated to qualify them for the position they are most likely to obtain.

But it is unnecessary to illustrate this point any further.

Waiving many other considerations that might be urged, the two facts already established—that the School of Practice flourishes at the expense of the other Grammar Schools, and fails to accomplish fully its *main* object, are sufficient in themselves to show conclusively a necessity for *some change* calculated to remove the evil and supply the defect.

The change which suggests itself to the judgment of the Committee as most likely to be productive of the best results would be *to abolish the present School of Practice, and remodel the*

Normal School, or in other words to *establish* a GIRL'S HIGH SCHOOL, with a *Normal Department*, and *appropriate* the *Normal School building entirely* to its use.

The pupils in the *Normal* department, comprising *those who intend to become teachers*, might then be trained in some of the Primary and Secondary Schools in the vicinity, instead of in a Grammar School so nearly allied to their own school as the Model School is.

Such an arrangement as this, effectually removing all grounds of complaint, and meeting every requirement of the case, could not fail to give general satisfaction.

Taking the plan and regulations of the High School for boys as a model, (and a better one need not be desired,) but slight changes would be necessary to adapt it to the organization of a similar institution for girls.

A school for young ladies, endowed with rights and privileges equivalent to those of the Central High School, conducted by a competent Male Principal and a sufficient number of well qualified Female Assistants, would be an ornament of which every citizen might justly be proud. Such an institution is necessary to complete our school system, and the want of one has long been felt by all who are interested in the cause of popular education.

No argument or reason can be adduced in favor of a High School for boys that does not apply with equal force in favor of establishing a similar one for girls. Without the facilities a High School would afford, young ladies who desire to obtain a more extended education than can be acquired in an ordinary Grammar School, must be sent to a private school or seminary, unless they intend to become teachers in our public schools.

The idea of establishing a Girls' High School on the basis indicated, must commend itself to the mind of every one as expedient and practicable in an eminent degree. The few difficulties and inconveniences that may have to be encountered, being more seeming than real, can be easily obviated. Every pupil in the Model School now can be accommodated in the Sectional Schools, as *there is ample room* for all of them. Very little, if any, additional expense need be entailed on the city; for the salaries of the three or four assistants whose services might be dispensed with in the schools that should be taken as Schools of Practice, together with those of the teachers now in the Model School, would compensate a sufficient number of additional teachers in the Girls' High School.

In order to allow the proposed change to be effected, the following resolutions are submitted :

Resolved, That the resolution requiring candidates for admission into the Normal School to pledge themselves to become teachers in the Public Schools, be rescinded.

Resolved, That the Grammar School now used as a School of Practice be abolished, and that the pupils attending it be transferred to the Sectional Schools, to which they belong.

Resolved, That the Normal School be so remodeled as to convert it into a Girls' High School, with a Normal Department, which shall have the right to occupy the whole building.

Resolved, That the Boys' Secondary and Primary Schools in Chester street be hereafter used as Schools of Practice.

JOHN HOUSTON, M. D.,	} Committee.
JOHN FRY,	
J. R. ANGNEY, M. D.,	
STEPHEN FARRAND,	
ISAAC LEECH, JR.	



